



PROMOTING STUDENT PARTICIPATION & ATTENDANCE

This job aid explains the role of attendance and participation in contributing to positive student outcomes, your role as an instructor, and BCIT's recommended practices.

This job aid will help you to:

- Plan and implement practices that manage class attendance
- Foster student participation
- Manage attendance issues as they arise
- Balance the needs of students and the instructional requirements of your course and program

Attendance versus Participation

While we often view regular attendance as an indicator for student success in our courses, just showing up is not enough. Active student participation in learning activities is the factor that links regular attendance with positive results.

Attendance

Attendance is the time a student is present in structured learning activities, either in person or online, during course delivery hours identified on the course outline and syllabus. We can measure attendance by counting the times a student is present for this scheduled class or activity time. However, attendance can only be measured; it cannot be graded.

Programs may stipulate attendance for a variety of reasons. Sometimes a program requires students to attend safety training before continuing with learning activities, and therefore all scheduled course hours or specific sessions are mandatory. In other cases, programs governed by accrediting bodies, industry partnerships, regulatory requirements, or official standards may also require attendance, often framed as hours of contact. In these cases, a program may have to submit both the student's attendance record and their performance results in order for the student to receive credit from the accrediting body. For co-ops, clinical placements, internships, and practicums, students may also need to work a minimum number of days. In all of these cases, attendance is a completion requirement, but it is not graded.

However, instructors cannot measure whether the student is actively engaged in learning or whether they have met the learning objectives just by counting their presence.

Participation

Participation refers to student engagement in structured learning activities. We can observe and evaluate a student's engagement in these activities by identifying participation indicators and describing what good, average, and poor achievement of the indicators looks like. We can then use a performance assessment tool such as a rubric to evaluate and grade students accordingly. The participation mark can be weighted and applied to the students' overall grade; 10% of an overall grade is a typical upper limit.

Examples of indicators of participation and engagement could be the following:

- the quality of students' postings to online discussion forums,
- the engagement of students working on-task during labs or in the shop,
- the quality of students' contributions to their group's completion of a task.

Participation is important because it is engagement with the learning activities that advances a student's attainment of your course's learning outcomes.

Absence as a Red Flag

Motivated students generally attend classes and make efforts to catch up on missed work if absent. A student's ongoing absence may indicate barriers such as competing commitments or loss of motivation. Tracking your students' attendance helps you identify students who may be encountering barriers.

When you are planning your course

Planning for Attendance

Determining Attendance Requirements

Your program may require students to attend specified training sessions to ensure a safe learning environment, or it may be governed by regulatory requirements or standards.

Determine your attendance requirements based on regulations, clearly state the requirements in your course outline, and discuss mandatory events with students on the first day of class:

1. **Mandatory safety requirements:** Identify the class dates or times in which you will cover mandatory safety training or regulations.
2. **Industry or accrediting body regulations:** If industry or accreditation regulations require a certain number of attendance hours for students to be eligible for certification or recognition, share the actual guidelines with your students.
3. **General attendance:** In all other circumstances, attendance should be strongly encouraged but will not be graded.

Determining Consequences

Determine the consequences for missed attendance based on requirements and communicate them to your students. Consequences may be informed by practices in your program and your school.

Deciding on Instructional Approach for Excused Absences

If students miss an evaluation with an excused absence, you'll need to give them the opportunity to catch up on missed learning and provide a concession pertaining to the missed evaluation. A concession could be a chance to complete the missed assessment, an alternative assignment, or another approach you deem suitable to assess the learning outcomes.

Examples of Attendance Statements You Can Use

Example 1: Encouraging Attendance (General Courses)

Attendance and Participation

Regular attendance and participation are strongly encouraged, as they support learning, skill development, and professional communication. While attendance is not graded in this course, your presence allows you to benefit from discussions, demonstrations, and applied learning activities that cannot always be replicated outside of class.

If you have an **excused absence** (for example, due to illness, religious or cultural observance, or other approved reasons), please notify the instructor as soon as reasonably possible. You will be provided with reasonable opportunities to make up missed learning activities or assessments, consistent with BCIT policy. Students remain responsible for completing required learning and staying up to date with course materials.

Example 2: Mandatory Attendance for Safety or Regulatory Reasons

Mandatory Attendance Requirements

Attendance is **mandatory** for specific classes or activities in this course due to **safety, regulatory, or accreditation requirements** (e.g., labs, safety training, or required technical instruction). These sessions are identified in this syllabus.

If you are unable to attend a mandatory session due to an **excused absence**, you must contact the instructor as soon as possible. Where feasible, the program will provide an alternative means to meet the learning requirement (such as a make-up session or equivalent activity). If a mandatory requirement cannot be reasonably made up, the instructor or Program Head will discuss next steps with you, which may include deferring completion.

Example 3: Clear Process for Excused Absences and Make-Up Work

Excused Absences and Academic Accommodations and Concessions

BCIT recognizes that students may experience circumstances that prevent them from attending class. Excused absences may include illness, disability-related needs, family or compassionate circumstances, and religious or Indigenous cultural observances.

If you have an excused absence:

- Notify the instructor as soon as reasonably possible.
- Documentation is **not typically required** for brief or intermittent absences unless specifically requested.
- The instructor will work with you to determine appropriate academic concessions, such as alternative assessments, adjusted deadlines, or other reasonable arrangements.

Flexibility does not remove essential course requirements, but it ensures that students are supported in meeting them fairly and equitably.

Preparing for Alternative Assessments

As an instructor, you need to provide alternatives for students with excused absences, but you are not obligated to provide learning from a missed day or evaluation for students with unexcused absences. An alternative could be a chance to complete the missed evaluation, an alternative but equivalent assignment, or another approach you deem suitable to assess the same learning outcomes.

Proactively planning for alternative assignments may include:

- creating a **bank of equivalent questions** aligned to the same learning outcomes to generate alternative tests.
- preparing **two equivalent versions of an exam** at the same time that map to the same learning outcomes and use similar formats and weighting, but differ in scenarios, datasets, or prompts.
- offering students **format choices** in how they demonstrate learning, where each choice aligns to the same outcomes and criteria but varies in format; for example, the format

choice could be between a live skills demonstration or a video submission with self-assessment. If a student misses demonstration day, they can switch to the alternative recorded format.

For the case of missed mid-term exams, perhaps work with other programs with scheduled mid-term dates to allow an absent student to sit the exam in another exam time slot.

In the case of missed teamwork, have teams prepare in advance for any absences by requiring the absent team member to notify the team, and offer teams the ability to decide how the absent student may resolve their absence.

Planning for Participation

Plan for Active Learning

Plan learning activities that employ a student-centred active learning approach. We learn best when we are active in the learning process. As an instructor, plan for what students are doing as opposed to what you are doing. Plan activities that support the learning outcomes of your course. Students will be more engaged doing activities that demonstrate their attainment of learning outcomes.

Assessing Participation

You will need to decide whether you grade your students' participation. Here are some factors to consider as you make your decisions.

Formal Assessment (Graded)

Assigning marks for participation has been shown to be a powerful motivator for student participation and learning engagement.

At many institutions, participation is often a maximum 10% of an overall grade weighting, and a rubric for this grading item is shared with students in advance. Sometimes participation may be weighted more heavily if it's justified by the course's specific learning outcomes.

Informal Assessment (Ungraded)

If it is not appropriate or feasible to grade participation, you can still informally assess your students on an ongoing basis by using the same performance assessment but not assigning a grade. Consider providing students with formative feedback regarding their participation based on these performance assessments at intervals throughout the course.

What is being assessed?

Set criteria that reflect the participation norms that you expect of your students, the requirements and expectations of your discipline, the learning outcomes of your course, and the objectives of the specific learning activities you have planned for your course. Use these criteria to create a performance assessment tool.

Who is assessing participation?

While we typically think of instructors assessing students' participation, consider having students assess other students' participation.

If you incorporate group work activities in your course, consider having team members assess each other's participation to complete the task. Sharing your participation performance rubric shows them what good participation looks like and can also be a means to work through situations when team breakdown occurs.

You could also consider having students assess their own participation. In addition to teaching them what you consider to be good participation, assessing their own participation gives them an opportunity for self-reflection on their own performance.

You can also get students to collaborate in the creation of the participation assessment for the class. When students co-create, their engagement is often enhanced.

Examples of Participation Rubrics

Example 1: Participation Holistic Rubric for In-class/Online Class and Lab/Shop Participation:

Criteria	Description of criteria achievement	Rating Scale: 0= never 1= demonstrates sometimes 2=consistently demonstrates
Frequency of participation	Student initiates contributions more than once during each activity.	
Quality of participation	Student's contributions are constructive and contribute to each activity.	
Listening actively	Student listens attentively when others present materials and perspectives, as indicated by their responses.	

Example 2: Participation Analytic Rubric for Online Discussion:

Criteria	Good	Acceptable	Unacceptable
Frequency	Participates 2+ times; postings throughout module.	Participates once during module.	Does not participate at all.
Content contribution	Posts information that is factually correct and is a substantive contribution; advances discussion.	Repeats but does not add substantive information to the discussion.	Posts information that is off-topic, incorrect, or irrelevant to discussion.
Follow-up postings	Demonstrates analysis of others' posts; extends meaningful discussion by building on previous posts.	Posts shallow contribution to discussion (e.g., just agrees or disagrees); does not enrich discussion.	Posts no follow-up responses to others.

Example 3: Analytic Rubric for Team Participation (whole team is assessed as one):

Criteria	Exemplary (4 marks)	Satisfactory (2 marks)	Unacceptable (0 marks)
Team collaboration	Team discusses and agrees on a clear definition of all tasks.	Tasks are defined informally and most but not all members understand them.	Tasks are undefined.
Individual contributions	All members take an active role.	Most members contribute.	Few members participate or project is completed by one person.
Teamwork	Team engages in follow-up activities to monitor progress.	Follow-up is sporadic.	There is no follow-up.

Example 4: Holistic Rubric for Individual's Participation in a Group (self-assessed, and/or peer assessed):

Criteria	Description of criteria achievement	Rating Scale: 0= never 1= demonstrates sometimes 2=consistently demonstrates
Contribution	Provided useful ideas and relevant information.	
Working with Others	Listened, shared, and worked well with team members.	
Focus	Stayed focused on the task and what needed to be done.	
Preparedness	Contributed needed materials and was ready to work.	

Communicate Your Expectations

Share your expectations with your students:

- **Achieving learning outcomes:** Clearly communicate to your students what you want them to learn (the learning outcomes) and what they must do to demonstrate that they have achieved the outcomes (the assessment plan).
- **Description of good participation:** Make clear what your norms are for participation in your course. These can be expressed via the assessment rubric if you are using one; if you are not, ensure that you clearly state what you expect participation to look like.
- **Connection to workplace expectations:** Consider linking your course expectations to your discipline's workplace norms if appropriate.

Example of Communicating Expectations You Can Use

Participation as Professional Practice

This course mirrors professional workplace expectations. Students are expected to arrive prepared, participate respectfully, meet deadlines, and communicate proactively if they are unable to attend or participate fully. Participation may be assessed through behaviours such as:

- engagement in class activities,
- contribution to group work,
- timely communication, and
- adherence to professional codes and competencies.

Where participation is evaluated, the assessment criteria will focus on demonstrated professionalism, not simply physical presence. If a student has an excused absence, alternative ways to demonstrate professional engagement will be offered, such as reflective activities, make-up tasks, or adjusted timelines, in accordance with an institution's attendance and academic concessions policy.

When you are teaching your course

Managing Attendance

Taking attendance helps you identify students who may need support. Students may also have excused absences. How you manage a particular student's attendance depends on whether the absence is excused or unexcused.

Excused Absence

An absence will be considered excused if it occurs due to illness, protected characteristics, or other approved reasons. Students must request excused absences in writing from you or the Program or Department Head (see the following section "Supporting Documentation").

Examples of possible excused absences include the following:

- Acute illness or injury
- Medical appointments or treatments that cannot reasonably be scheduled outside of class time
- Recovery from surgery or hospitalization
- Observance of religious holidays or practices
- Participation in Indigenous cultural, spiritual, or ceremonial practices
- Unexpected personal circumstances (for example, house fire, job loss, accident, travel delays)
- Serious illness, injury, or death of a family member
- Required caregiving responsibilities due to urgent or unforeseen circumstances
- Global events and natural disasters

In cases of excused absences where the missed class includes a graded assessment, you or your Program or Department Head must make every reasonable effort to allow the student to make up that assessment through alternative means. In cases when the absence is due to a protected characteristic, the institution will provide reasonable accommodation.

Disability-Related Accommodations

Academic concessions provide short-term flexibility, while individual accommodation plans (IAPs) arranged with Accessibility Services address ongoing disability-related barriers under legal frameworks, including the BC Human Rights Code and Accessible BC Act. You should refer students needing ongoing disability-related accommodations to Accessibility Services.

Students with disabilities or ongoing health/medical conditions may experience disability-related circumstances—such as chronic illness, medication effects, mobility challenges, episodic symptoms, or medical appointments—that can impact their ability to attend class or meet attendance requirements. Students registered with Accessibility Services may be approved for flexibility with attendance when disability-related needs affect their participation, which will usually be noted as an accommodation on the student's IAP. Students are responsible for notifying you as soon as reasonably possible and in writing when an absence relates to their IAP. Such absences would be considered excused, and you should accommodate them accordingly.

Non-Disability-Related Accommodation Requests

Situations such as religious observances, family care, or cultural practices may also require

accommodations related to attendance under the BC Human Rights Code. Such absences would be considered excused and should be accommodated accordingly.

Reasonable Accommodation and Undue Hardship

BCIT must provide reasonable accommodations unless doing so causes undue hardship, a high threshold involving safety, cost to the Institute as a whole, or rights interference. Accommodation is a shared responsibility, and students must accept reasonable solutions. Denial of accommodations is rare and requires consultation with Associate Deans and relevant offices such as Accessibility Services or Respect, Diversity, and Inclusion.

Supporting Documentation

An instructor, Program Head, or Department Head may request appropriate supporting documentation (not including personal medical information) only when absences violate stated attendance requirements or lead to missed deadlines or exams. Not all absences require documentation or evidence. In cases of brief or intermittent absences due to illness, medical notes should not be requested. It is not generally appropriate to require documentation to support religious accommodations. Students should not provide supporting documentation unless asked to do so.

Addressing Absences and Absenteeism

As an instructor, you determine if attendance is mandatory and whether absences are excused. Students must submit written requests for excused absences. When in doubt, decisions should favour supporting the student's learning.

Questions for Determining Concessions

Below are some questions you may wish to pose when working with a student to determine appropriate attendance-related concessions or accommodations. Choose the questions that make sense for the specific circumstance. Start with the assumption that the student has good intentions and wishes to be successful in the course. As always, respect students' privacy and keep the information they share confidential.

Understanding their situation:

- What's going on? Can you explain the specific challenges you're facing that are impacting your attendance?
- If your request is related to an ongoing medical or mental health condition or disability, have you registered with Accessibility Services?
- How is this affecting your work? Are there specific assignments or exams that you're concerned about?
- Was there anything stopping you from communicating about this earlier? Early communication can help us find solutions sooner.
- Have you asked for attendance-related concessions before? If so, what were the circumstances?

Exploring possible concessions:

- What kind of concession would be most helpful? Is there a specific assignment or exam we need to discuss?
- How can we ensure you can still learn the material and demonstrate your knowledge? We want to find a reasonable solution that supports your learning.
- What steps can you take to minimize the impact of your situation on your academic work?
- How will the attendance concession affect your future academic progress and ability to succeed in subsequent courses if any?

Moving forward:

- What are the specific terms of the concession? (ex. new deadline)
- How can we stay in touch to monitor your progress? We want to make sure you're on track.

Possible Concessions

Consider what concessions would help the student, how to ensure learning and knowledge demonstration, steps to minimize academic impact, and effects on future progress. Terms of concessions and communication plans should be clearly established.

Type of Concession	How it Works	Pros	Cons	Proactive Course Design Examples
Extension	Additional time to complete an assignment.	Reduced stress	Potential for rushed work; may disrupt other commitments.	All students have an extension they can use at any point in the course without having to provide explanation.
Deferral	Postponement of an exam at a later date.	Allows for recovery from illness or other circumstances.	May require additional study time; potential scheduling conflicts.	Partner with colleagues to allow student to sit missed exam in their scheduled invigilated exam sitting.
Incomplete Grade	Temporary grade assigned when a student cannot complete coursework due to extenuating circumstances.	Provides flexibility to complete work; avoids academic penalty.	Requires additional effort to complete work; may delay progression or graduation.	Build in time at the end of the course for students to get caught up with or complete make up assignments.
Alternative Assessment	Adjustment of an assessment task to meet a student's needs	Provides a fair and equitable assessment opportunity.	May require additional work from the instructor; potential for inconsistency in grading.	Provide choice in how students demonstrate their learning, with different assessment options for each assignment.
Reweighting Assessments	Adjusting the weight of different assignments to accommodate a student's circumstances.	Provides flexibility in assessment; reduces stress.	May alter the overall course structure.	Give students the opportunity to drop the lowest grade and/or make up or revise an assignment without need for explanation or request.
Pass/Fail Option	Allows students to choose to receive a pass or fail grade for a course rather than a letter grade.	Protects GPA; reduces stress.	May limit future academic and career opportunities.	Determine pass benchmark.
Late Penalty Waiver	Waiving late penalties for assignments or exams.	Provides flexibility; reduces stress.	May encourage procrastination; higher volume of grading required for instructor toward end of course.	Eliminate late penalties.
Additional Support	Providing additional support, such as office hours, tutoring, or mentoring.	Improves student understanding and performance; increases engagement.	Requires additional time and effort from instructor.	Provide in the syllabus and in class the times that you are available to meet with students and the other academic supports available to them.
Flexible Submission Dates	Allowing students to submit assignments on different dates or times.	Considers individual needs and schedules; reduces stress.	May complicate grading and feedback processes.	Have assignments due on a Friday but provide option for students to take until Monday to submit.
Additional Time	Allowing students to take longer than you expect to complete timed assessments.	Reduces stress; may yield more authentic assessment.	Increases instructor invigilation time; does not work if speed is a specific learning outcome being assessed; room scheduling may cause constraints.	Schedule and allow all students to take up to two hours for an exam that you anticipate will take one hour.
Advanced Access to Course Material	Providing students with course readings or material in advance of instruction on that content.	Students learn at own pace; aids students who use alternative formats or assistive technology.	May require advance planning on the part of instructor; may impact scaffolded learning.	Provide slides, readings and assignments to all students in advance of the course start.

Handling Missed Safety Lessons

When required safety training is missed, you should promptly notify the student, explain why the session is mandatory, and confirm whether the absence qualifies as excused.

If the absence is excused, you should make every reasonable effort to provide a make-up session or an equivalent alternative that allows the student to meet the safety requirement; where this is not feasible, the Program or Department Head should be consulted to determine next steps.

You may determine that the student cannot proceed with all learning activities until knowledge of related safe work procedures is demonstrated and/or hazards identified. The student may be able to continue with *other* learning tasks covered by previous safety training until they make up the task-specific safety lesson.

Note that you are not required to help students make up these missed requirements when the absence is unexcused.

Alternative ways to accommodate missed safety lessons include the following:

- Use peer teaching of safety lesson or tasks and require a subsequent instructor sign-off before the student can perform the task independently. Students may participate collaboratively in an observer role as part of the formative learning process.
- When synchronous learning is essential, alter the delivery order of activities for the remainder of the class to deliver the required safety lesson.
- Have the student join other cohorts/specialities to cover safety prerequisites at the expense of another course that is easier to make up later.

Managing Absences, Absenteeism and Student Support

Excused and Unexcused Absences

Once you have determined whether an absence is excused or not excused, communicate your decision.

Examples of Email Templates You Can Use

Example 1: Excused Absence – No Graded Work Missed

Subject: Excused Absence Confirmed

Hello [Student Name],

Thank you for letting me know about your absence on [date]. I'm confirming that your absence has been recorded as **excused**.

No graded work was missed during this class. Please review any posted materials and connect with a classmate if needed to catch up on notes or discussions.

If you anticipate additional absences or have any questions, please stay in touch.

Best regards,

[Instructor Name]

Example 2: Excused Absence – Graded Work / Required Activity Missed

Subject: Excused Absence and Next Steps

Hello [Student Name],

I'm writing to confirm that your absence on [date] has been approved as **excused**.

Because a required activity/assessment took place that day, we will work together to determine a reasonable way for you to complete the missed learning or assessment. Your make-up option will be:

- [brief description of alternative assessment, make-up activity, or adjusted deadline]

Please confirm that this plan works for you, or let me know if you have questions.

Kind regards,

[Instructor Name]

Example 3: Excused Absence – Safety-Related Activity

Subject: Excused Absence – Required Make-Up Activity

Hello [Student Name],

Your absence on [date] has been approved as **excused**.

As the missed session involved a required safety-related activity, you will need to complete the missed requirement before progressing further in this area of the course. The following make-up option has been identified:

- [make-up lab, alternate session, supervised activity, etc.]

Please note that while reasonable efforts are made to support excused absences, repeated

absences may limit the availability of make-up opportunities.

Let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

[Instructor Name]

Example 4: Excused Absence Related to an IAP or other protected grounds

Subject: Excused Absence Confirmed

Hello [Student Name],

Thank you for your message. I'm confirming that your absence on [date] is considered **excused**, consistent with your approved accommodation [or consistent with BCIT's duty to accommodate].

We will work together to ensure you have a reasonable opportunity to complete any missed learning or assessment requirements, while maintaining the essential requirements of the course.

You will find the learning materials for the class here [attach or insert link to any learning materials such as PowerPoint slides that the student may need]. If you have questions about the learning covered, please [brief description of how the student can connect with you].

As the missed session involved [insert explanation of any graded work/required activity /industry requirement missed], your make-up option will be:

- [brief description of alternative assessment, make-up activity, or adjusted deadline].

Please continue to notify me as soon as reasonably possible if future absences relate to your accommodation.

Best,

[Instructor Name]

Example 5: Unexcused Absence – No Graded Work Missed

Subject: Absence Recorded as Unexcused

Hello [Student Name],

I'm writing to follow up on your absence from class on [date]. As [no request for an excused absence was received/I have not approved your absence as excused], this absence has been recorded as **unexcused**.

While no graded work was missed, you are responsible for reviewing posted materials and catching up on any missed learning. Please note that regular attendance supports success in this course.

If you experience ongoing challenges with attendance, I encourage you to reach out early so we can discuss appropriate next steps.

Regards,

[Instructor Name]

Example 6: Unexcused Absence – Graded Work Missed

Subject: Unexcused Absence and Missed Assessment

Hello [Student Name],

I'm following up regarding your absence on [date]. As this absence was not approved as excused,

it has been recorded as **unexcused**.

Because a graded assessment took place during this class, the course policy applies, and the missed assessment will receive a grade of **zero**. Please refer to the course outline for details on attendance and assessment requirements.

If there are circumstances you believe should be considered, you may wish to consult with your Program Head or Associate Dean for advice.

Sincerely,

[Instructor Name]

Example 7: Unexcused Absence – Mandatory Safety-Related Activity

Subject: Unexcused Absence – Required Activity Missed

Hello [Student Name],

This email is to confirm that your absence on [date] has been recorded as **unexcused**.

As the missed session involved a mandatory safety-related activity, you may not be able to proceed with related learning activities until the required knowledge or skills are demonstrated. Please note that for unexcused absences, we have **no obligation** to provide a make-up opportunity. If you are unable to demonstrate the safety competencies, you may be unable to proceed, which means [insert explanation of next steps based on course/Program specifications].

I recommend reviewing the course outline carefully and contacting me if you have questions about how this may affect your progress in the course.

Regards,

[Instructor Name]

Identifying and Communicating with Absent Students

Keeping attendance helps you identify students who have stopped attending or accessing your online course. If the class is in-person/synchronous, absenteeism may be characterized by a student not coming to class and not reaching out to you. For online asynchronous courses, a student may not have logged in or completed modules but has not reached out to you. Sending a timely email to those students who have stopped attending encourages communication and support.

Examples of Email Templates You Can Use

Example 1: Consistent Non-Attendance (Mandatory Attendance Requirements)

Subject: Attendance and Participation Check-In

Hello [Student Name],

I'm writing to check in because I've noticed you've missed several classes. I recognize that students often juggle multiple responsibilities, and unexpected situations or competing priorities can come up.

At the same time, attendance is a required part of this course due to safety, regulatory, or core learning expectations, and regular participation supports both your learning and

industry readiness. To be transparent about expectations, I want to draw your attention to the attendance section of the course outline below:

<insert attendance section of course outline>

If attendance continues to be inconsistent, you may miss key learning activities and information, which could put you at risk of not being able to successfully complete the course. BCIT may also limit the number of times a course may be repeated, so it's important to address attendance concerns early.

If there are circumstances affecting your ability to attend, please let me know as soon as possible so we can discuss whether academic concessions or next steps are available. If you are finding that you are no longer able to continue in the course, please review the withdrawal steps and deadlines here (only students can initiate a withdrawal):

<https://www.bcit.ca/admission/tuition-fees/refunds-withdrawals/>

If barriers such as medical, emotional, financial, or housing concerns are affecting your attendance, support is available through Early Assist:

<https://www.bcit.ca/student-life-office/early-assist/information-for-students/>

Please reach out so we can talk through your situation. My goal is to be clear about expectations, while also ensuring you're aware of the supports available to you.

Best regards,

[Instructor Name]

[Course / Section]

Example 2: Consistent Non-Attendance (No Mandatory Attendance Requirements)

Subject: Attendance and Engagement Check-In

Hello [Student Name],

I'm checking in because I've noticed you've been absent from class on a regular basis. I understand that students often balance multiple commitments, and I want to acknowledge that challenges can arise during the term.

While attendance is not mandatory for this course, regular participation is strongly encouraged because in-class activities, discussions, and applied learning experiences support your success in meeting the course learning outcomes. To be transparent, I've included the attendance and participation expectations from the course outline below:

<insert attendance section of course outline>

If absences continue, it may become difficult to keep up with course content and assessments, which could increase the risk of an unsuccessful outcome. Addressing this early can help prevent that.

If there are barriers affecting your attendance or engagement, please let me know so we can discuss strategies to help you stay on track. If you are considering withdrawing from the course, please review the withdrawal steps and deadlines here (only students can withdraw themselves): <https://www.bcit.ca/admission/tuition-fees/refunds-withdrawals/>

Support is also available through Early Assist if personal, health, financial, or housing concerns are impacting your studies:

<https://www.bcit.ca/student-life-office/early-assist/information-for-students/>

I encourage you to connect with me if you'd like to talk through your options.

Best regards,
[Instructor Name]
[Course / Section]

Example 3: Occasional Non-Attendance (No Mandatory Attendance Requirements)

Subject: Quick Check-In

Hello [Student Name],

I wanted to check in after noticing that you've missed a few classes recently. I recognize that occasional absences can happen, especially when unexpected circumstances arise.

While attendance is not mandatory for this course, regular participation helps you stay engaged with the material and supports your progress toward the learning outcomes. For clarity, I've included the attendance and participation expectations from the course outline below:

<insert attendance section of course outline>

If your absences were due to short-term or unexpected circumstances, please let me know. I'm happy to help you identify any missed material or discuss reasonable ways to catch up.

If challenges become ongoing or start to affect your ability to learn, Student Services and Early Assist are available to provide additional support:

<https://www.bcit.ca/student-life-office/early-assist/information-for-students/>

Please don't hesitate to reach out if you have questions or would like to connect.

Best regards,
[Instructor Name]
[Course / Section]

Checklist for Planning and Managing Attendance and Participation

Before the Term Starts (Course Design and Planning)

- Clearly document attendance requirements (if any) in the course outline.
- Clearly explain the difference between attendance and participation.
- Include course outline language on excused absences, how students notify you, and how missed work or assessments may be made up.
- Plan alternative assessment options in advance.
- Design participation around learning outcomes, not seat time.

In the First Weeks of Class

- Review attendance and participation expectations explicitly with students.
- Identify which sessions are mandatory and why.
- Link participation expectations to professional or workplace standards, where appropriate.
- Where applicable, involve students in co-creating participation criteria.

Ongoing Teaching and Monitoring

- Track attendance, especially where attendance is a requirement.
- Watch for patterns of absenteeism or disengagement (in-person or online).
- Reach out early with supportive, transparent check-in emails.
- Keep student information confidential.

When a Student Is Absent

- Determine whether attendance was mandatory or encouraged, and excused or unexcused.
- Request written notification for excused absences.
- When an absence is excused and a graded assessment is missed, provide a reasonable make-up or alternative assessment.
- Do not routinely request documentation for brief illness or religious or Indigenous cultural observances.
- Request documentation only when mandatory attendance requirements are violated, or deadlines or exams are missed.

Accommodations and Concessions

- Distinguish between academic concessions (short-term flexibility) and accommodations (ongoing disability-related needs via IAPs).
- Refer students with ongoing disability-related needs to Accessibility Services.
- Treat absences related to protected characteristics as excused.
- Assume good intentions and work collaboratively with students.
- Consult your Associate Dean or relevant offices if unsure.

Supporting Students in Difficulty

- Encourage early communication when attendance becomes inconsistent.
- Share withdrawal information when appropriate (students must withdraw themselves).
- Refer to Early Assist when students are not responding or disclose significant barriers.
- Document decisions and follow up in writing.

Key Mindsets to Hold

- Attendance supports success—but perfect attendance is not always possible.
- Participation ≠ presence; engagement can be demonstrated in multiple ways.
- When in doubt, decisions should favour supporting learning.